

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002

SPEECH OF

HON. FELIX J. GRUCCI, JR.

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 30, 2001

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2620) making appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2002, and for other purposes:

Mr. GRUCCI. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of Weldon Amendment which would increase the Fire Assistance Grant Program by \$50 million.

This past Monday, it was my honor to announce the awarding of a Federal grant to the Davis Park Fire Department in my district. This grant was one of only 108 that were awarded to fire departments across this country under the FEMA's Fire Assistance Grant Program.

The Davis Park Fire Department along with nearly 20,000 other fire companies applied for grants—that is almost two-thirds of all fire companies in America. In the coming months, more than \$100 million in grants will be rewarded to fire companies for vehicles, fire prevention programs, equipment and training.

The Davis Park Fire Department will use its \$30,000 in funds to train its firefighters in the most recent firefighting and rescue techniques. When I spoke with the department's chief he expressed his excitement over how the grant would help to strengthen the safety of not just the citizens of Davis Park but also the brave men and women who serve them.

By supporting the Weldon Amendment we can guarantee that Fire Departments like the Davis Park will be able to benefit from this vital program next year. In doing so we can increase the safety of countless communities throughout our nation.

I call upon all of my colleagues to join me in providing our nation's local fire departments with the opportunity to improve the quality of both services they offer and safety standards under which they serve.

IN RECOGNITION OF RICARDO MONTERO DUQUE

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 31, 2001

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Major Ricardo Montero Duque for his efforts to fight the communist threat, and later communist dictatorship, in Cuba, and his commitment to Cuban immigrants throughout America.

Ricardo Montero Duque was born in Matanzas, Cuba on July 4, 1925. In 1950, he graduated from the Military Academy of the Cuban Army with the rank of Second Lieutenant. As a result of his hard work and dedica-

tion, he quickly climbed through the ranks of the military hierarchy, eventually assuming the rank of Major.

Major Duque's extensive military career can be traced to battles against the guerrilla forces of Fidel Castro. In 1956, Major Duque was instrumental in leading the Cuban Army against Fidel Castro and his rebel forces in the province of Oriente. During the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, he commanded the No. 5 Infantry Battalion of the 2506 Brigade, was captured by Castro's forces, and later imprisoned for 25 years. On June 8, 1986, Major Duque was released from prison in Cuba and reunited with his family in Union City, New Jersey.

Over the past two decades, Major Duque has remained actively involved in the Cuban American community. Former New Jersey Governor Christie Todd Whitman appointed Major Duque to serve as a member of the "Cuban Task Force" of New Jersey. He has served as Director and Editor of the newspapers "El Cuba Libre" and "La Semana." In addition, he has twice been elected to serve as President of the Union of Former Cuban Political Prisoners.

Beyond his services to the community, Major Duque has been a real estate agent since 1987. He is happily married to Esther, his wife of fifty years.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Ricardo Montero Duque for his unfaltering commitment to fighting the terror and repression of communism in Cuba, and for his outstanding contributions to the Cuban American community.

PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. DONALD A. MANZULLO

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 31, 2001

Mr. MANZULLO. Mr. Speaker, small business participation in government procurement is dropping. While the dollar value of procurement opportunities is relatively constant, the absolute number of small businesses winning government contracts has dramatically decreased over the past four years.

One possible solution to this problem can be to enhance the role of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs). During the 1980's, Congress created local PTACs around the country to increase small business participation in defense procurement. Modeled after Small Business Development Centers (SDBCs) run by the Small Business Administration (SBA), these centers offer free advice and help to small businesses both in educating them about how to get involved in government procurement and also how to obtain contracts. Most of the PTACs are co-located in a local higher education institution or a Chamber of Commerce. About half of the funding for most of the PTACs comes from the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). The remainder comes from the state government and/or the local host (i.e., the community college). States currently have a choice: they can either ask for up to \$300,000 to run a state-wide program or regional centers can ask for up to \$150,000 to run a program locally.

Some states have decided to run a state-wide program in order to have continuity of service throughout the state. However, some states do not care and have allowed regional or city PTACs to operate. Currently, 15 states have regional or city PTACs that receive an excess of \$300,000. This penalizes states like my home state of Illinois who have opted for a "good government" solution—a seamless delivery of procurement assistance services throughout the state.

I have introduced the Procurement Technical Assistance Improvement Act to increase the DLA grant match to states that run a state-wide PTAC program so that they would be able to receive up to \$600,000 in funding, double the current level of \$300,000. This would potentially benefit the 29 states and the one territory that have a state-wide PTAC program and the six states and the four other territories that do not have any PTAC program. It is important to remember that each state with a state-wide run PTAC program would not automatically receive a \$600,000 grant from the DLA because each proposal would have to stand on its own merits. Currently, 10 states and one territory do not even receive the full \$300,000 in grant funds from the DLA for a state-wide PTAC program. Thus, this proposal does not necessarily mean that the cost of the program would balloon. Only those states that submit a sound proposal who serve a large population would qualify for a maximum of \$600,000. Finally, this proposal would not mean that states with regional centers would receive less funding. This proposal is silent on the match received from DLA to regional PTACs.

With the criticism of recent Pentagon procurements that disadvantage small businesses, this is one way to remedy the problem. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

HONORING TRACEE EVANS

HON. KEN BENTSEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 31, 2001

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, August 3, 2001, one of Houston's prized reporters will be recognized for her top notch work by the Association for Women in Communications and the 2001 Clarion Awards at the Renaissance Harborplace Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland. Ms. Tracee Evans, of KTRH radio in Houston, Texas, will be awarded this prestigious award for her documentary on the struggle in Kosovo.

The Association for Women in Communications is a professional organization which champions the advancement of women across all communication disciplines by recognizing excellence and promoting leadership. The Clarion Awards is a renowned competition recognizing excellence in many fields of communications. One Clarion Award is given in each field of communications to an exemplary entry and it is judged on quality, substance, style, originality and achievement of the objective.

Ms. Tracee Evans' hard work and creativity distinguish her in the field of communications. Her documentary on Kosovo is just one example of the many creative and insightful pieces she has created. Her ingenuity serves as a